

The Injury

A young man hit me in the stomach on an Amsterdam streetcorner.

By intent or accident I do not know.

A girl was beside him. She spoke to him. He spoke to her. It happened. They walked away, still speaking. Neither looked back.

I do not understand Dutch. I did not understand them.

All I could do was make a noise and fall. A woman picked me up. She comforted me in a foreign language. She asked me some question I could not understand. Then she laughed and spoke unaccented English. She spoke to me as mother to child.

"Are you English?" she asked. She would not believe me. "You are Swiss," she said. She said, "You are German." And walked away.

She did not turn around, although I tried to explain: "I have been hit in the stomach on an Amsterdam streetcorner. By intent or accident I do not know."

The humiliation could not have been greater had it been planned for years.

Planes

What can we do? They would tell us they had done it.
The sky is crowded with somebody else's words.
The planes have taken off. The reservoir is low.

The man by himself in the Automat
Murmurs lovingly about bombs.
Bombs. Over and over, he murmurs, "Bombs."

-- Jack Anderson

New York, New York